

# THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 6. VOL. XVIII.]

JUNE, 1844.

[WHOLE No. 210.]

## SERMON CCCLXV.\*

BY REV. GEO. W. BETHUNE,

MINISTER OF THE THIRD REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA.

### THE STRENGTH OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

"(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever.

"Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness);

"Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

"Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

"And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you."—2 Corinthians, ix. 8—14.

THE divinity of the Gospel is seen in its divine effects. In the beginning God made man in his own image, and humanity, though ruined by sin, remains the most wonderful proof of Almighty energy, goodness and skill. But the miracle of the likeness of God in man, is repeated with vast increase of honor to the Creator, and favor to the creature, when by the word of salvation sinners are transformed, as the Apostle Peter assures us, into "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter, i. 3, 4). The interval between the best perfection of a Christian and the perfection of God his Sanctifier, must be immeasurable; yet, as the reflection of light is light, the graces of Christian character are divine, because they are effects of divine grace.

The consequences of faith in the Gospel always correspond with the grace of the Gospel. The Gospel reveals the love of God to the believer, and faith works by love; God makes all grace abound toward the believer in all things, and faith abounds to every good work (8 ver.). His enjoyment of the great goodness of God, expands the believer's capacity of affection, and faculty of doing good. The greatness of the condescension of God in admitting the believer to his fellowship, and a co-operation in goodness, elevates him to a dignity and comprehensiveness of purpose, approaching, so far as the finite can

\* Preached before the Foreign Evangelical Society, New York, May 5, 1844.

infinity, divine benevolence. The believer is united to Christ his glorified Head, and has a conscious active sympathy with all the members of Christ's true body, his Church. The Holy Ghost inspires him with holy life, and he knows it to be "the working of that mighty Power" (Eph. i. 29), whereby God is "subduing all things to himself" (Phil. iii. 21). God adopts him as his son, and all the children of his heavenly Father become his beloved brethren. And when through Christ, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he prays to God his Father for blessings upon the multitude, thus dear to him, in all lands and among all people, he feels himself linked to the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of His grace, who has said, "Unto me shall all flesh come" (Ps. lxxv. 2). Feeble as the believer may seem to be, his means of Christian benevolence are unbounded, the counsels he follows are infallible, and wherever upon the face of the whole earth lives a needy soul, there, like the Spirit of Divine Love, he can go in the providence and bounty of God, laden with benefits; and thence, as the harvest pays back the seed of Spring manifold, will return, in the order of the same providence and bounty, blessings rich, fragrant, and multiplied upon his own soul, with abundant thanksgivings unto God.

This is the substance of our text, the length of which gives us the advantage of the Apostle's reasoning, always incomparably better than any the uninspired preacher can substitute for it. If the discourse should be long also, it will not be longer than the interest of the theme demands.

The occasion of the Apostle's address in this part of his epistle, was the necessity of the mother church at Jerusalem, which, besides suffering severely from the malignant bigotry of the Jews (1 Thess. ii. 14, 15), who, especially after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts xi. 19), spoiled them of their goods, and pressed them with a great fight of afflictions (Heb. x. 32-34), were now under the calamity of famine. (Acts xi. 27, 28.) Collections had been made for these "poor saints" in many churches, as those of Galatia (1 Cor. xvi. 1), and Macedonia (Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. viii. 1-4), upon the just principle, that the Gentiles, having received the Gospel from Jerusalem, were bound to serve in carnal things those with whom they had been made partakers in spiritual things (Rom. xv. 27). The same kindness, promised, indeed, a year before (2 v.), is now asked from the Christians in Achaia, of which Corinth was the chief city. This introduces the whole subject of

#### CHRISTIAN CHARITY;

which, from the tenor of the New Testament, we may define to be,

LOVE TO CHRIST MANIFEST IN LOVE TO THOSE WHOM CHRIST LOVES.

We have before us the Apostle's doctrine, argument, and exhortations. Let us endeavor to profit by them, and learn the exercise of true Christian Charity, while we consider,

*First.* ITS EFFORTS.

*Secondly. Its RESOURCES.*

*Thirdly. Its ENCOURAGEMENTS.*

FIRST : The EFFORTS of Christian Charity.

The Apostle sums up these, briefly and clearly, in the eighth verse, where he says, "that ye may abound to every good work." The true Christian manifests his charity,

1. In "good works." 2. In "every good work." 3. In "abounding to every good work."

1. What are *good works*? It has been a question, whether the name of God be derived from good, or good from the name of God. But as God is the alone standard of good, it becomes us rather to believe that good is the epithet which describes conformity with him, the source, the pattern and the end of all truth. Good works are such as God does.

There are works impossible for the creature, which belong to God only. He alone can create. He alone is the author and preserver of life. There are works forbidden to the subject and reserved to the sovereign—judgment and vengeance. "Judge not, lest ye be judged." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

But while God makes it sin for us to trench upon his prerogative of severity, he graciously qualifies us by his creative power, to resemble him, by imitating his acts of kindness. He is Himself infinite love. "He openeth his hand and supplieth the wants of everything that liveth." He is "the God of the stranger," the "Father of the fatherless," "the Husband of the widow," "the Spirit of consolation," and "the Light" in which alone we can "see light." Thus has he commanded us, in all our relations with our fellow creatures, to obey a law the fulfilling of which is love; and declared that we bear the best likeness to our Father in heaven, when as his children we are like him in love, pity, and doing good to the poor, the sorrowful, and the ignorant.

God has revealed himself most fully in his Son, Jesus Christ, by whom he declares his unsearchable love to our lost race, and the way, the truth, and the life, by which the sinner may return to Him and to happiness. The Son of God, by taking upon himself our nature, and walking in all our human duties, has translated for man the divine example. His whole life was a "going about doing good;" his every miracle an act of goodness; his entire aim mercy to the wants and ills of this life, and, especially, mercy to the soul in the salvation, by his cross, of the life everlasting. None ever sought relief from him in vain. The heathen, the Samaritan and the publican, the sick in body and the sick in mind, the despised, the outcast and the criminal, were all welcome to his goodness.

At the same time, and by the same salvation, he has inseparably united to that faith which enjoys his redeeming power, a love like his own. None can follow him except in love for his people, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another;" in doing

good to all who need our service, for, pointing to every variety of human suffering, he says, "Inasmuch as ye do unto the least of these, ye do unto me;" and, above all, in spreading the good news of salvation from sin, the best remedy for all ill, and the best solace of all sorrow, the fruits of sin, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature." Thus are we to prove our love to God, by acts of goodness to all he loves upon earth, and our love to Christ, whose love has given us all, by doing good in his most holy name.

2. There is no limit set to this goodness which is required of the Christian. "*Every good work*" is his duty. Every form of goodness he is to attempt. Every human creature he is to serve. The love of the Christian is philanthropy. The field of the Christian is the world. Christianity knows neither country nor nation, allows no exception of character or condition. It is like the sun and the rain, full of blessing for all. Wherever there is good to be done, there lies the Christian's service to God and his Master. He owes duties to his household, but every man is his neighbor. He owes duties to his country, but every man is his brother. It is treason against God, who so loved the world as to send his Son Jesus to take away the sins of the world, for him to say, Thus far may I go in goodness, but no further. The Gospel, which he is commanded to preach to every creature, binds him a debtor to seek that creature's good, and endeavor to save that creature's soul. Our duty is never done, while there remains any good for us to do.

3. So far from any partial goodness being enough, the true Christian *abounds* to every good work, in liberality, constancy and zeal.

God gives liberally, and he loves a cheerful giver, who is like himself. There must be no stint nor grudge in our charity, but "all bountifulness;" not as from covetousness which restrains, nor from necessity which measures, but from the overflow of a loving spirit, which delights to pour forth, the more it pours forth. We read of but two instances in which the Master approved a service as sufficient; that of the widow who gave all that she had, and that of Mary who did what she could. The rule of Christian goodness is to love our neighbor, every man, as ourselves; the example of Christianity the devotion of Christ, who gave himself, in all the sympathies of humanity, and in all his divine attributes for us.

This must be constant. The Redeemer, with all his mighty power, wrought while it was day. The crown of life awaits only those who are faithful unto death. There is no rest promised or allowed to the servant of Christ here. All his time belongs to God, with all he is and all he has, and, therefore, belongs to the Church and to mankind for Christ's sake. He may "wait for his shadow," and hope for eternal repose in the joy of his Lord, but it must be as the faithful laborer who works through the heat and burden of the day, glad to do good until the Master says, "Well done!"

Need we add, that he must be abundant in zeal? Is he not to love

God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength? Has not Christ bought him, all he is, all he has, and all he can be or can have through grace, with the price of his most precious blood?

Is he not, therefore, bound to serve unto the uttermost all whom God has commanded him to serve? When we contemplate the vast field of our labor, the wide ripe harvest into which we thrust the sickle, the vast multitude of various sufferers who require our goodness, is there any zeal that can overflow the limits of duty, that can pay back the debt we owe to Christ, or that can fulfil the command to be "merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful?"

Thus, my brethren, must we "abound to every good work," if we would walk worthy of our Christian vocation, and bear the image of our God.

Does any one ask in reply, Who is sufficient for these things? Whose strength, whose means, whose faculties of heart and mind are equal to such a duty? How can we reach every individual of our race? How relieve every want of every sufferer? Is there not danger that in thus enlarging our aims, and reaching after so much in our purposes, we may neglect and trample upon duties nearer to our homes, and by a fantastic extravagance waste the charity, which, under a judicious economy, might accomplish more certain good? My brethren, these are the doubts of ignorance, or the hesitations of unbelief. The Christian is sufficient for nothing of himself, but when God enjoins upon us a duty fitting the followers of Christ and the children of the Father of Christ, he makes it our privilege by the assurance of strength to perform it from on high. For consider

#### SECONDLY : The RESOURCES of Christian Charity.

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

The resources of the Christian are the grace of God, "all grace," all grace "abounding," all grace "abounding always," all grace abounding always to "all sufficiency in all things," that he may be "enriched in everything to all bountifulness."

This includes—

The grace of God *in Christ*.

The grace of God *in the Spirit*.

The grace of God *in Providence*.

##### 1. The grace of God in Christ.

The grace of God in Christ was his eternal *purpose*, his most delightful purpose, his greatest purpose, for it was his purpose to reveal his most manifold wisdom, his most mighty power, his most perfect truth in goodness and mercy toward lost sinners, for the study and admiration of all his intelligent creatures. For thus says the Apostle—(Ephes. i., 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of

his will, to the praise and the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him."

Yes, holy brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, it is the purpose of grace in the Gospel of the Son of God to triumph over sin throughout our suffering world, and bring it again and for ever into communion with heaven. Small as the band of the "predestinated," the "chosen," and the "accepted," may seem to be now, all nations shall yet be made to swell its happy numbers. The time is coming when, in all the earth, every heart will exult and every tongue rejoice with the love of God. Then shall our deserts be as the Eden of the Lord, and tears and want and strifes and wrong be known no more, and concord, joy, and a common bliss unite the long-distracted family. The victory of the King of Peace and Righteousness will be complete, and the full grace of that mystery be manifest, "which," as our beloved brother Paul writes, "from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." This is the grace of God which strengthens every Christian in doing good. It is the purpose of God, which "worketh in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Is God not able to execute his decrees of grace in Christ? So is he "able to make all grace abound," to "all sufficiency" in our "every good work."

The grace of God is infinite in the *merits* of Christ the Saviour, for they are the merits of God incarnate. It was the Son of God, who walked in all the duties of man. Who dare limit the reward of his obedience? It was the Son of God, who dwelt in the sufferer when he drank the cup of trembling, when it pleased the Father to bruise him and to put him to grief, and when, pouring out his soul unto death, he cried, "It is finished." Who dare limit the power of his atonement? It was the Son of God, who burst the bars of death, and cleft the heavens for the upward way of the man Christ Jesus, "to make continual intercession for us," not as a suppliant kneeling at his Father's feet, but as a Son and a Prince, the true ISRAEL, sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Who dare limit the efficiency of his prayers?

It is the infiniteness of Christ's merits as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Jesus our atonement, and the glorified Elder Brother of his church, that warrants the Christian's zeal in every good work, for the present and eternal good of man. Show me a sinner so vile that Christ cannot save him, a saint so weak that Christ cannot strengthen him, a mourner



so sad that Christ cannot comfort him, and only then shall we discover one whom a Christian cannot bless.

The vocation of the Christian to every good work, is itself part of the grace of God in Christ. For what says the Evangelist? "To as many as received him gave he power (right, prerogative), to become the Sons of God," because they are united unto Him as their Head, and, as his body, are partakers with him in all things which belong to his redemption. Therefore has the Christian all grace in all things to every good work, because he is one with Christ, the Hope, the Blessing, and the Saviour of all who believe in his name. Is there a bound to the grace of God in Christ? That alone is the bound of the Christian's privilege to do good.

## 2. The grace of God in the Spirit.

As God the Father sent his Son, and God the Son wrought out the merit of salvation, God the Holy Ghost executes his peculiar office in making the salvation efficient according to the eternal counsel of grace.

The grace of the Spirit is in the *word*, inspired by his almighty energy, adapted by his unerring wisdom, and rendered divinely sweet by his pervading love, for the conversion and sanctification of the sinful soul. Thus, when guided by its teachings, proclaiming its doctrines, and relying upon its power, the Christian knows that the instrument of goodness he wields is the very truth of God, which must prevail in accomplishing the good whereto God sent it. He is certain of success, the best success, the most complete success, as certain as that right shall prevail over wrong, wisdom over error, and the Gospel over "every imagination which exalteth itself against God." The truth of the word of God is the grace of the believer in doing good.

The grace of the Spirit is in the *Church*, for it is only the power of Him "who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead," and "set him at God's right hand in heavenly places," which has "quickened" every member of Christ's spiritual body from "death in trespasses and sins;" and he, who gives the Church life, supplies it with all the means of growing life to perfection in glory. The Spirit, by the word, is able to make grace abound to the Church in wisdom, even the knowledge of God and his will; in strength, enabling them to resist temptation and put forth a superhuman power in all holy service; and in love, uniting its members to each other, and in devotion to Christ, and in doing good to man. And this grace of the Spirit in the people of God, and in himself as one of them, strengthens the believer to every good work, when he thinks of the many-hearted prayer that ascends for blessing upon his labors, and of the many-handed zeal conspiring with his to subdue the world by the cross; and, especially, as he anticipates the promised day, now retarded only by the quarrels and the doubtings of the church, when that Spirit shall be poured forth without measure upon the people of God, and every Christian stand boldly and closely up to his duty, and the army of Israel, their multitudinous hosts in firm phalanx and with the instant determination of one heart, will urge forward its resistless march, Jesus, the captain of salvation, at its

head, until the banners of peace, and love, and righteousness, wave over the whole earth. The Spirit of God in the Church, is the strength of every believer to good works.

The Spirit in the *conscience*, is the power of God for the conversion of the world. If He wield not the word, no human arm has strength to lift up the mighty weapon and flash its splendors in the light; but, when his own hand grasps his own sword, he drives it to the very quick of men's morbid souls, and none can resist its double-edged keenness. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, he slew thousands to give them life again, and thus will he prevail until all his enemies bow in penitence before him. Wherefore, then, does he delay his triumph? Is his arm shortened? Has his word lost its power? No (all glory to the almighty Paraclete)! He can come down, and convert all this assembly in a moment. He can convert all in every congregation throughout our land, throughout Europe, throughout Christendom. He can spread his wings over all the earth, and, suddenly as light chased old Chaos, turn all her sinners into saints, and her waste places into Paradise. Why, then, does not the light and the glory appear? Christians, the Holy Spirit is given in answer to fervent, believing prayer. Do we believe in the sufficiency of his grace? When the Church is able to grasp the fulness of the promise, and trust in the necessity and almightiness of the Holy Ghost, the fulness and the blessing shall be ours, and the whole earth the Lord's. It is this grace, which strengthens the Christian in his work for the world's salvation. There is no conscience the Holy Ghost cannot quicken, no heart he cannot sanctify, and, therefore, there is no soul we should not seek to save.

### 3. The grace of God in providence.

All the means of doing good are in his hands. He requires us to work by means, for our instruction, and in accommodation to our weakness; but he is ready to supply the zealous Christian with all means, means sufficient unto every good work.

Do we need money? His is the silver and the gold. Money is as much his gift as was the manna to the pilgrim tribes. If his people faithfully use what he gives them, he can, and he will, give them more in answer to their faith, for the same purpose; and when the treasury seems utterly exhausted, from "their deep poverty having abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. viii. 2), he can, by various channels, again enrich them in everything "to all bountifulness" (11 v.). "He that giveth to the poor," whether they want the bread of this life, or that of the life to come, "lendeth to the Lord," and none pay interest so quickly or so largely as He. He returns the trust multiplied, that, through another exercise of zeal, it may be multiplied again. When has the Church put the grace of God to this test? When has she had the faith of the widow, to cast in all her living to the treasury of the Lord, believing that He can supply more? How many Christians have impoverished themselves for His sake, who "for their sakes became poor?" Some few, who have had but little to part with, may say that they have left all, like the disciples, whose all was



a few fishing boats and well worn nets ; but how many rich men, who call Jesus, "Good Master," would go away sorrowful, if required to sell all they had for Christ's service ? Yet, my brethren, until the Church attains something like this liberality, we do not fully trust God's providence in the supply of money. If Christians had given to God that, which, in his chastening, he has taken from them in the last seven years, what a stupendous advance in good might have been made ? O that we had grace to try this experiment for once ! we would never relapse into our slow, "covetous" giving (5 v.) again.

As with money, so with men. "Pray ye to the Lord of the harvest, that he would send laborers into his vineyard," said the Saviour. How send them ? Clearly by his grace in their hearts inclining them to say, Send us. My brethren, the moment we pray this prayer, and prove our sincerity in it by being ready to support the sent, God is able and willing to send them. Indeed, he anticipates this by giving us already more candidates for such holy labor, than we can employ by our present liberality. Hundreds are waiting for the work ; send them, and Providence will make ready thousands more. There never was a time yet in which his providence was not in advance of our faith.

As with money and men, so with other facilities of usefulness. When Christian zeal first began, in modern times, to send the missionary, and to give the Scriptures, how few and difficult were the channels of communication, and those how interrupted by wars among the nations ? How poor, comparatively, was the knowledge of languages, and how slow and expensive the art of printing ? Now, God, by agents utterly unknown to men before the Church proved her need of them, has vastly increased the facilities of reaching and corresponding with distant people ; the written and systematized languages of the world have been nearly doubled, and that by the philological labors of missionaries, more than of any other class of students ; and by the improved machinery and science of the press, the cost of publication is reduced to less than a fourth part, while there is peace throughout the world, as at the advent of Jesus in mortal weakness, for his coming again in mighty power. No mind could have anticipated this, a life-time ago ; no mind can imagine what God can do in the life-time next to come. The grace of God in providence leads his Church far before their zeal.

All the necessary direction, God, in providence, will give. We may desire by God's grace to do good, but we must also learn from God's grace *how* to do good. He can suggest a thousand methods of doing good, of which we are yet ignorant, but which will be, by his blessing, most wisely efficient. How recently has he taught us to teach Sunday Schools, and to distribute tracts, and Bibles, and good books, enabling the poor to read, and giving them libraries ? And to educate poor young men, "rich in faith," whom he has chosen for his ministry, that from their scanty provisions, as from the wallet of the lad in the Gospels, he might multiply the bread of life for thousands, and the fragments that remain be twenty fold more than the supply at the beginning ? How has he led us to combine our strength, and by a wise co-

operation, to distribute labor and increase results immeasurably? And what skill has he added to our first crude attempts among the heathen, from the experience of practical men, guided by his counsels? But the time would fail me to tell of the grace of God in the guidance of his people, when they "commit their way" of Christian charity fairly to him.

So will his providence open our passage through difficulties, whether they arise from the pride of men's imaginations, the jealousy of governments, the malice of persecutors, or all combined. Jesus, the Breaker, goes up before us. When war and political tumult agitate the seas, God is upon the waters. He can, he does, he will, control all, move all, and overrule all, for the good of his Church. The cupidity of men may make a wide breach in the wall of China, but the Ark of the Lord, borne upon the shoulders of consecrated Christians, enters with sin that grace may much more abound. A cruel lust of conquest, with an atrocity never paralleled in any other warfare, may penetrate far into Afghanistan, but the King of Peace and Righteousness will secure the meek and lowly triumphs of a far greater conquest. Even the enslaving of the black man, the right of which no sophistry can justify, and the continuance of which no circumstances can excuse, has been the occasion of introducing within the benighted shores of Africa, the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. Who can tell what the same providence may do in another year, when the power of Mohammedanism reels and totters, opening a way for a new crusade, which will employ no sword but that of the Spirit; when all Europe sits upon a smouldering volcano; when an hour of political convulsion may topple down the proud towers of man's strong enemy, pontifical Rome; and the giant, PEOPLE, is struggling with more than earthquake strength to throw off from his oppressed but unbroken bosom, the thrones and altars which tyrant bigots heap upon it? Let but the Church go forward, and seas of difficulty shall make a dry path for her feet. Mountains shall sink, and valleys rise, for the highway of our God.

Yes, my brethren, Christ is "Head over all things," and (ten thousand blessings on that Name which is above every name!) "Head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." There is not an extension of trade, an advance of science, a revolution in government,—no, not a tide that runs, nor a wind that fills a sail,—which is not part of that "mighty" working by which God is subduing all things to Himself. With such resources, is not the Christian able to "abound in every good work?"

THIRDLY: The ENCOURAGEMENTS of Christian Charity.

These, as presented in the text, are three:

The good of those we serve; the glory of God; and the return of blessing on ourselves.

1. The good of those we serve. (12 v.) The particular reference here is to the temporal wants of the church at Jerusalem; but when Christian charity embraces all men (13 v.), the good must be taken in its most extensive meaning, and, especially, as including

The salvation of the soul.

The world is full of wants and woes, because it is full of sins, and the Gospel which takes away the curse, alone can relieve and console its sorrows; and, therefore, it is the delight of the Christian, who has been renewed with the divine likeness, to extend for the benefit of his fellow sufferers, the Gospel, which hushes the tumults of war, and rebukes oppression, and takes the burden from the captive, and points every sufferer to the sympathy of Jesus and the "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

When we think of the love of God, of what Christ has suffered, and of all the Spirit has done or is doing for the soul, we ask with the astonished Psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" But, when we reflect upon what the soul is, and what through divine grace it will be, great as the price of its redemption was, and much as we must adore the riches of divine mercy, we see that there was no waste of the Redeemer's blood, and that the joy of beholding his ransomed ones complete in glory, was worth the sufferings which purchased it. Here we can know but little of that intellect and affection, which make the spiritual creature greatest of the works of God, though vast is now the comprehension and the activity of man in thought and affection. But what must the human mind be, when heaven for ages shall have cultivated its expansiveness, when its faculties shall have shaken off every trammel, and it ranges with ever increasing vision, through the ever widening glories of God, and God himself is the immediate guide of its inquiries! What worlds on worlds shall then roll within its thought? What joy of holy knowledge shall then radiate through all its stupendous capacity? When even now the heart grows and finds room for each and all the multitude of beings whom God commends to its affections, what will that affection be in a sphere too vast for the collisions of self, too rich for the suspicions of jealousy, too happy for the gradations of pride; and when, countless as are the inhabitants of our eternal home, we shall recognize every brother, and the electric fire of love thrill ever and at the same instant through all hearts of God's holy family?

Think of nature, when it was chaos; when darkness brooded over all; when the lawless winds rushed and battled together; when the waters raged, and the worlds, as yet in shapeless masses, were jostled and confounded in the universal waste; and then, of that nature, when the spirit of God had done his work, and light was poured out like a golden cordial from the Almighty throne, and the calm waters reflected it, and the winds breathed harmonies of praise, and the green soil teemed with flowers, and the forests with foliage; when the orbs took their stations in the choral dance of joy, and myriads of glorious beings walked amidst the new creation, admiring, adoring and blessing the divine Author and Designer, while He beheld all with complacency, for all was very good. Yet this was but a faint type of the change, wrought by the same Spirit in that universe, the human soul, by the

power of the Gospel. Worse than chaos would have been the darkness of its despair, the conflict of its passions, the ruin of its faculties; but beautiful as nature in her morning hour will it be, when in heavenly bliss it is serene with the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and populous with the images of all that is holy and pure and glad. It is the blessedness of Christian charity to be employed as an instrument in the work; it will be its blessedness to share in the divine satisfaction of contemplating its finished and eternal excellence.

## 2. The glory of God.

This is the great purpose of our vocation, and the great aim of Christian zeal; and in nothing can the Christian promote the glory of God so much as in devotion to Christian charity.

Thus says the Apostle: "The administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the saints, but is abundant by many *thanksgivings unto God*; whiles by the experiment of this ministration *they glorify God* for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them and unto all men."

"By this," said the Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is the divine love in the life of Jesus, his poverty that we might be rich, his lowliness that we might be exalted, his unceasing zeal that our rest might be eternal, and his death that we might never die, which give such attractiveness to the Gospel. It is the same divine love, dwelling in the Christian's bosom, controlling all his means for the good of every man who needs, humbling him to be every man's servant, with all his energies and at every sacrifice, even of life itself, if death must be braved in his merciful mission, which convinces the world that faith in Jesus is no idle dream, but a celestial principle triumphing over the narrowness of self, and uplifting the spirit of man, by nature so fallen into enmities and envyings, and jealous suspicions of his fellow man, to a sympathy with the mercy and benefactions of God. It is because this Christian light does not shine, or shines so faintly through the covetousness and indolence of the Church, that men do not glorify our Father which is in heaven. When Christians reach fully the elevation of Christian charity, no infidelity can refuse the conviction that it is other than the great power of God.

The Christian, who hears of our charity, who, perhaps, receives some of its benefits, who beholds its saving consequences, will feel his faith strengthened, and his zeal made strong by our example and sympathy, for then will he know by signs indubitable, that the arm of God is not shortened, and that the Holy Ghost is yet present with his people in sanctifying power; that he works not alone, but in company with Christ's many chosen, whose prayers ascend and whose hands are joined with his, and that the promise given to faith is secured by the aggregated confidence of many believers. Then, while he gives all glory to God, will he undertake with new spirit every good work. O brethren, by our faint-heartedness and slowness, and partial charity, we discourage each other. Sight struggles against faith, when so few

proofs of evangelical power are manifest. Let each of us shake off this unworthy sloth, and the contagion of our zeal will be felt throughout the body of Christ; every Christian warming and cheering his brother, receiving from him warmth and courage in return, until the whole Church is swept away by love of Christ, to live only for Him and his cause.

Nor is it the Church alone that observes our charity, the divine effect of divine grace. The hosts of God's angels, intent upon the mysteries of redemption and the providence of Christ in consummating its triumph, observe the progress of the Church. If they rejoice over the first penitence of the sinner, how much more will they rejoice over that repentance manifested in the ripe yet growing fruits of Christian zeal! If throughout eternity they shall admire Jesus in his saints, as they shine in their Master's glory, how much must they delight in every new progress we are making on earth to that celestial perfection! How strange to those eager servants of the divine will must seem our feeble efforts, evidence of faint love for Christ! But were the Church to put on her beautiful garments, and in grand union of all her energies, and with ever increasing grace, shine in the light of abounding charity, how would they make heaven ring with hallelujahs to our God and his Christ!

Christians, is there not reason for us to count all things but loss, that we may convince the world of Christ, waken to emulation of Jesus his drowsy Church, and fill heaven with the praise of innumerable angels?

3. The return of blessings on ourselves.

We have been obliged several times to anticipate this thought, but cannot dwell upon it too often or too long. We are linked vitally in our Christian being to every Christian. We need their love, their prayers, and their coöperation.

O how precious is a Christian's *love*, the love of one beloved himself of God, who takes us into the same heart with Christ, and loves us for Christ's sake! It is our likeness to Christ, manifest in our strong charity for them and for all men," which awakens this Christian love towards us, as the Apostle here says to the Corinthians, they "long after you for the exceeding grace of God toward you." Such was the love of Christians, when in the early times of persecution they had one purse, and acknowledged only one name; now how sadly distant and cold towards each other are those Christians who divide themselves under many names! No wonder our blessings are few and our Christian comforts incomplete. But how like heaven would the Church on earth be, were our interchanges of service and love made from full hearts, and universally with God's true children!

How precious is a Christian's prayer, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, who goes with holy boldness to the throne of grace, pleading for us through the strong intercessions of the Son of God, who is ever the advocate of his people, and whom the Father heareth always! When the prayer of a man, subject to like passions with ourselves, offered in faith, opened the windows of heaven, which his pray-

ers had before shut for more than three years, and brought down abundance of rain, what showers of blessing must descend upon that Christian soul for whom a Christian prays! But, when a general charity shall awaken in each Christian soul such grateful prayer for all his Christian brothers, and the countless petitions mingle as they rise in a cloud of faith, like fragrant exhalations from "a field the Lord hath blessed," who can estimate the deluge of mercy that shall flow from the throne of our common Father, covering the earth as the waters cover the sea?

And with these prayers there will be a universal coöperation unto every good work. All hearts will beat in unison with the heart of Christ; all his members be zealous in their several spheres to do his gracious will, and the strength of the Church, now shamelessly dormant or distracted for want of mutual understanding, or wasted in fratricidal controversy about things indifferent, be as the fulness of his power who filleth all in all.

O my brethren, it but needs that the Church live and love and labor as the body of Christ, to give us a resistless and speedy triumph over all the opposition of earth and hell to "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

Christians, the Society at whose call we have assembled this evening, affords us a most noble opportunity of illustrating the vastness, richness and power of true Christian charity. Its purpose is to assist evangelical Christians in foreign lands, and especially on the continent of Europe, in maintaining and spreading the Gospel of our common Lord.

I might plead with you for them as the Apostle did for the church at Jerusalem. They are in trouble. The might of the oppressor is on them. They are pursued by an idolatrous bigotry, more malignant than the wrath of the Jew against the Christian innovators who strove to dissipate the darkness of long established forms. They are pinched by famine, not of bread, but of the word of life. Yet are they brethren of our faith. We cannot pray "Our Father, who art in heaven," we cannot take the bread and the wine of the sacraments, we cannot follow Christ, without acknowledging them bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, in the body of Jesus.

As the Gentiles received the Gospel from the church of Jerusalem, so have we received the blessings of that second Pentecost, the blessed Reformation, through them. It is the land of Calvin that calls us to return unto them a grateful recompense; the land of Luther, the land of Zuingli, the land of those sturdy Protestants, in the unconquerable Low Countries, whose church was baptized into fellowship with Jesus, by a double deluge of blood and water. Brethren, the cry comes to us for help from the saints which are at Geneva, the modern Jerusalem, whence has gone forth God's second proclamation of religious truth and civil freedom. Can we deny their claim?

Shall we reply, as some of little faith have done, that our own land



needs all our resources and sympathies? Was Achaia, was Galatia, was Macedonia, perfectly converted, and supplied with Christian privileges, when Paul, by inspiration, begged from them for the poor saints of the mother church at Jerusalem? Was not the grace of God manifest toward the churches of Macedonia, when, in "a great trial of affliction," and "out of their deep poverty," they abounded "in riches of liberality?" All our resources needed for our own land! Our resources are the infinite grace of God, and are they not sufficient to every good work? I know that our land needs much, but where is there a church or a Christian impoverished by what has been done at home? When we have spent all that we have in religious charities, and God refuses to give us more, we may hold back our hand from works to which his providence evidently directs us, and, especially, from duties which have more of debt than giving in them. There is no need that we should do less for our own people, but there is strong need that we do more for Christ. And where is there a heart which loves the cause of Christ abroad, that does less for the cause of Christ at home? No, like the cruse of the faithful widow, the Christian's means grow with giving, and the restraining of them tends only to poverty. Let Christian charity act worthy of its name, and the word of God is pledged for our sufficiency or abundance in every good work. When divine grace is exhausted, then we may hesitate.

But the advocate of this cause may take yet higher ground. It is, as we have proved, indispensable to the triumph of evangelical truth, that its friends be united in catholic love, and concert of action. We must make practical that article of our faith, which holds to one Church, and one communion of saints. The hosts of antichristian Rome are many, but never divided. One heart, beating within the Vatican, circulates one zeal through all the monstrous body, which returns again to feed the fountain of its pernicious life. Popery knows no country, but mingles with all people; speaks all languages, but one creed: shouts for democracy in America, and excommunicates the liberals of Spain; demands repeal for Ireland, and arrests in France the movement of July; tolerates no other religion when it has the power, and whimpers of persecution if in Protestant lands the Bible is read in the schools. It speaks from the imperial city, and in all the world, cardinal and prelate, and monk and priest and penitent, own, by mystic sign and ready genuflexion, devout submission. Its eyes are upon every man; its voice is heard in royal cabinets and republican legislatures; its hands tamper with the absolute sceptre and pollute the ballot box; its learning gives tutors to the children of the great, and opens free schools of error for the children of the many; its charities mingle the poison of idolatry with bread for the hungry and medicines for the sick. Everywhere it is one, though in a thousand shapes. Who can avoid admiration of the vastness, the energy, and the system of its combination! No wonder they are so strong, when they are so united.

Brethren, let the tactics of an enemy teach us the method of success which the Gospel has taught in vain. There are portions of the

Christian world not papal, whose narrow bigotry refuses union with us; but what, except unworthy suspicions and weakness of faith, prevents a catholicism of evangelical servants under our one Head and High Priest, Jesus? Why should we know country, or language, or race, when we are children of one Father, and servants of a mission to the world?

It is the glory of this Society that it has been the first to stretch the hand of Christian fellowship to Christians beyond the seas, and say, Brethren, we are one. "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Christ has broken down all walls of partition between us, we are "one body by his cross." The tie that binds us is stronger and more noble than all the relations of earth. Henceforth our union shall be practical. Your wants shall be ours, your labors ours, your successes ours; our hearts, our prayers, our means, shall be yours.

Let but this spirit prevail throughout the Church, and, no longer sickly, feeble, and convulsed, she will shake off the dust of her shame, and putting on her majesty, beauty, and strength, walk forth the true presentment of Christ on earth; before the mild splendors of her brow, error and superstition, and cruel hate, will fly like mists at morning light, and her hands, filled to overflowing with the grace of God, will scatter the blessings of peace, and righteousness, and knowledge, over all the world. This is the second reformation we need, another descent of the Holy Ghost, the sure precursor of complete redemption. God forbid that there should be any diminution of effort for the good of our countrymen; yet, if we were obliged to choose, such an exhibition of the communion of saints as this league of Christian love presents, were worth the planting of a thousand churches at home.

Let us also consider the opportunities and means of usefulness which our European brethren enjoy. The fabrics of superstition, which here are new and modified, there are crumbling to ruins, tottering in decayed ugliness to their fall. The people more than suspect the alliance of priesthood and tyranny to grind them in bondage. Every blow now aimed at the despot, strikes the bigot ministers of a desecrated cross. If the Bible be not recognized as the charter of freedom, the right to read it will be claimed as the privilege of freemen. The sympathies of every liberal heart are with a free religion, every advance of popular rights opens the way for the Gospel, and each hour is big with portents of far-spreading changes.

And with what means do our brethren work? By every method of prayer and action which the Gospel enjoins. But they have also recalled from long disuse that system to which Christianity owed its first, most rapid, and greatest successes, the employment of *the humble* and *the many* in the distribution of the simple truth. Jesus was an humble man. He wore no doctor's robe, and taught neither in Lyceum, Porch, Academy, nor Pharisaic school. He went forth into the streets of the city, and the highways of the country, a poor man

among poor men. He chose his Apostles not from the scribes and rulers, but the unlearned fishermen of Galilee, and he sent out the seventy as he had done the twelve, to teach as he had taught. Then was Christianity pure, and when the Church grew by the multitude of her converts, her multitude of God-inspired, humble men, carried among the nations the Gospel they believed and loved; and then did power, and priesthood, and ancient prejudices and arrogant philosophies, go down before the truth in its lowly majesty. So would the church have continued to prevail, had not those, her wily enemies, changed their force for policy, and, bribing her with gifts, obtained her baptism, entered her citadels, filled her offices, corrupting what they were sworn to preserve, and polluting the sacraments they administered.

I would not speak in disparagement of learning, with proper limits, as an aid to religion. But the Church has too much idolized learning and authority ever since the Reformation. And what has been the consequence? In university after university, on the continent of Europe, professors of theology have substituted a proud rationalism for the child-like faith of Jesus; and still more recently the most venerable seat of learning in Britain has startled the Protestant world with the bad design of uniting learning, genius, and taste, in a conspiracy to bring back the ages of darkness upon the world, when the few ruled the many and fattened the priesthood. Popery again uplifts her bruised and brazen face in hope, as she sees one so hoary with years entering her noviciate, aping her pretensions, copying her garments, and practising her mummeries; boasting her titles, bearing aloft her symbols, and attempting, with ridiculous failure, the thunder of her anathemas. Not a few Christians prognosticate a general mischief, and would invoke some Christian Hercules to slay the hydra that comes forth from deeper shades than the Lernæan swamp to ravage the Church.

Our friends in France and Switzerland have taught us better means and better hopes, by sending an army of simple men, with no other weapon than the pure Gospel on the holy page; and God, who blessed the rod of Moses, and the hammer of Jael, and the labors of primitive Christianity, has blessed, and will bless, the colporteurs with their Bibles and their Tracts. Already they diffuse the holy leaven. Already have many souls been brought to God. Already does superstition gnash her teeth, as she feels the net drawn closer and closer around her by the multitudes of these faithful men. Let us but increase the army as we may, and Babylon herself shall fall before them. Strength is in their weakness, for the excellency of the power is of God.

Consider, also, our deep interest in their successes. Already do many Christians tremble at the incursions of popery upon our own soil. A little while since, some of us may have smiled at these fears as visionary. The light of the nineteenth century seemed too great, in this land of free thought, to allow the influence of such superstition over a single mind not educated under it from early life. But have we

not seen, within a few years past, thousands of converts flocking around the standard of a vulgar, ignorant, and vile leader, whose pretensions to prophecy would be most contemptible, had they not been so mischievous? Have we not also been astonished at the defection of grave and educated men, from the simple Gospel as it is written in God's own word, to the authority of shadowy tradition; who, while they insist upon a church in a priesthood of doubtful genealogy, would revive the aristocracy of ancient Pharisaism, which accounted the common people as little better than profane? The growth of Mormonism among the vulgar, and of this perversion of Christian doctrine, which has no name of sufficient dignity for utterance here among the more refined, show us too plainly that the human mind, in no circumstances, can be preserved from superstition, except by the Spirit of God.

We are not then safe from Romanism. Every eastern wind wafts hitherward its priests and adherents, laden with gifts to corrupt our people. Already has the cry been heard, arousing Christians to defence of truth and freedom. But whence do they come? Why stand we only on the defensive? Why may we not cross the sea and besiege Carthage? Why not plant our vanguards on the passes of the Alps, send our spies into the very camp of the enemy, and await the happy moment (which, if it please God, is not distant), when, like Attila, though with better weapons and higher aims, we may thunder at the gates of Rome itself? When ancient Rome fell, the empire was broken into fragments. When papal Rome falls, popery will soon be no more. One blow on the head is worth a hundred at its extremities. One thrust to its heart, and all the convolutions of its myriad folds will relax in death. Are there no smooth stones in "the brook that flows fast by the oracles of God?" Is there no shepherd boy nor herdsman's son among those mountain Christians to wield a sling?

Christian brethren, I have done.

I congratulate you on your high vocation to abound in every good work.

I congratulate you on the infinite resources of your charity, the sufficiency of the grace of God.

I congratulate you on the vast rewards which await your certain successes.

I congratulate you on the present opportunity to prove your belief in the promise, that though you give all you have, the wealth of God will supply you with abundance more.

"Now He that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." Amen.

## SERMON CCCLXVI.

### THE LAMENTATION.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—**JER. VIII. 20.**

"Who can conceive the emotions with which this sentiment will be uttered, when it comes from the heart agonized with despair? Many, who have read it again and again without feeling, who have perhaps slept in insensibility when it has been pronounced from the pulpit, have uttered it in tones of terror in a dying hour, and have been overwhelmed in view of it at the judgment seat. The figure of a harvest appears to be a favorite one with the sacred writers, to illustrate the condition of man. The world is the field. The messengers of God are now abroad, gathering in the harvest. The children of the kingdom will soon be all gathered to their heavenly home; and the impenitent cast out for ever, like the weeds and tares which are burned. It will be but a short time before the angels in Heaven will welcome the harvest home; and but a few more suns will rise and set, before the lost will exclaim, in hopeless despair; "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

There are but few, if any, who now think that they shall be left at the time of ingathering. They feel that, though their safety be not now ensured, they will soon be led to the Christian's hope and joy. Thousands have, on a dying bed, acknowledged that this false hope deluded them to neglect the immediate duties which God has enjoined. They have been struck with amazement and despair, when they found that they were dying; and that, after all, the harvest was actually past, the summer ended, and they not saved.

Probably no one ever really expected to be left in this condition. There is no one who believes that he shall ever feel the horrors of eternal wo. And yet one after another is continually leaving us with no hope to cheer a dying hour. Can any language describe the feelings of such an hour?

But, says one, "I have no fear that this will be the case with me." The very fact that you have no fear is the source of the greatest danger, that you will not escape this awful doom. As long as Satan can keep you from fear, he is sure of your destruction. He asks for nothing more than that you should cast away fear. He exults in your composure, and rejoices day after day, as he sees that the harvest is drawing to a close, that the summer is nearly ended.

But who are they, who shall hereafter take up the sad lament of the text? Look at the profligate man. He says it is no matter how

I live in this world ; all the punishment I have to fear, I shall receive here. This idea keeps him quiet and indifferent now ; but in a dying hour conscience bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. He cannot silence its compunctious visitings. He writhes upon his bed in mental agony, shrinking from the awful presence of his Judge. He goes before the judgment seat, from the midst of his sins ; and in the anguish of his despair he exclaims, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." Satan claims him as his own. Like Judas, he goes to his own place ; "and the smoke of his torment for ever ascendeth," as he exclaims, "I am not saved ! I am not saved !"

Accompany me to the bedside of this dying youth. He has heard the pleadings of a father's prayers, and has witnessed a mother's tears for his salvation from his childhood. He has been affectionate in feeling, and amiable in life. He has always resolved that he would, at some future period, attend to the subject of religion. The Spirit has striven with him and he has said, "go thy way for this time." To the urgency of pious friends, he has replied, "wait for a more convenient season." But look at him now. He is pale and emaciated with sickness. He is dying.

"His quivering lip hangs feebly down,  
His pulse is faint and slow."

Hark ! he faintly speaks ! what does he say ? Listen ! "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." He speaks again ; it is in the sad moanings of delirium. He raves of hell and demons and endless woe. Look at his distracted mother. Look at his broken-hearted father. Their son is lost, and they are weeping that he ever was born. He would not heed their prayers ; he would not attend to their counsels.

Whose history is this that I am describing ? Yours, my young friend. It is this young lady who is in danger of thus dying—it is this young man, who is hastening to this appalling death-bed. Oh ! the madness, the inconceivable madness of sin !

Do you see this man who looks so solemn and humble ? His countenance is dejected and depressed. He walks as if heavy anxiety preyed upon his heart. What is the matter ? He is anxious for his soul. He is an inquirer for salvation. He goes to his pastor, and says, "I feel that I am a lost sinner. I have lived without prayer—I have neglected the Saviour—oh ! what shall I do to be saved ?" His heart is full. The Holy Spirit has convinced him of sin, and now urges him to surrender himself to God. He hesitates—he loves the world—and the struggle against sin is hard.

Look at him again. The Spirit is grieved away, he is thoughtless as ever. He has forgotten all his fears, and hardly thinks of heaven or of hell.

Follow now this man to his dying hour. The minister of God sits at his bed-side. "Have you any hopes of recovery ?" he asks. "No,



sir," says the dying man ; " the physician has told me that I cannot live more than a day or two, at most." " Do you feel prepared to die ?" " I know I am not a Christian, sir, but I have no feeling upon the subject." " Have you never felt interested in the subject of religion ?" " Yes, sir : some years ago, I felt very anxious, but I had not resolution to brave the ridicule of the world, and now it is too late for me to make any efforts." " No, my friend, it is never too late to repent." " Perhaps not, but I feel no disposition to think of the subject ; at any rate, I am too weak now to entertain such agitating thoughts."

A few days pass away, and look at him again. He is pallid and lifeless ; a stiffened corpse. The shroud is wrapt around him. He is in his coffin. Open the lid. Look at those thin lips, the sunken eye, the emaciated cheek, the cold brow. The day of probation is gone. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and he is not saved.

" There are no acts of pardon passed  
In the cold grave to which we haste ;  
But darkness, death, and long despair,  
Reign in eternal silence there."

Fellow immortal, whose history is this ? Whose name might be written under this biography ? Reader, may it not be yours ?

" Life is the time to serve the Lord,  
The time to ensure the great reward :  
And while the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."

How important is this sentiment ! How true ! We are all familiar with it. Almost every child can repeat it. And yet we live as if death were the time to serve the Lord, the grave the place to ensure the great reward. There is madness in the heart of man.

" Ah ! but," says one, " thank the Lord I am safe. I experienced religion ten years ago, and joined the Church. I am a professor of religion. I have nothing to fear. I have the pleasure, while I read, of feeling that this discourse all belongs to my neighbors." " But," God says, " that there are sinners *in Zion* who shall be horribly afraid." " There is no earthly sinner, who will more bitterly cry out, in the lamentation of the text, than the unfaithful, insincere professor of religion. While the messengers of God are endeavoring to gather in the harvest and to save immortal souls, he, in fancied security, says, " my soul is already saved. I have already entered the ark. There is nothing for me to do." Sin reigns around him, and he utters no earnest prayers, and makes no Christian effort. The opposers of religion exult in his unfaithful walk, and say religion is but a name. He loves not the society of Christians on earth, and will be repelled from the joys and the anthems of the blest on high.

He dies as he lives, deluded by a false hope. Then he sees his folly. But it is too late. The harvest is past. He cries out in despair. But it is of no avail. The summer is ended. He looks upon the glo-

ries of the heavenly world, beaming in golden splendor in his view. But, oh! the scene only aggravates his wo. He hears the cold repulse, "I know you not." He trembles at his doom, "Depart, ye cursed." As he goes away to the eternal prison, he exclaims, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

Whose history is this? Perhaps every individual who reads or hears this can point to some professing Christian, whose history he fears it will be. But the sincere, humble, prayerful Christian, will apply it to his own heart. With deep emotion he will inquire, "Lord, is it I?" With unfeigned humility he will say, "It would be just if the Lord should leave me thus to perish." With most earnest supplications he will pray, "Lord, hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." But the professing Christian who has but a name to live, will say, "These remarks have no application to me; I experienced religion many years since." He will not even ask himself, *now*, if the words of the text have application to him, but *then*, he will utter them in accents of undying despair.

This subject introduces to the reflecting mind, a train of thought the most solemn and impressive. Oh! what is this transient life! It is stealing noiselessly, but most rapidly away! How soon shall we all sleep in death! We now look forward to the dying scene, knowing that it must come; and in a few days it will come. We shall feel that we are dying; we shall go through the scene now shrouded in so much mystery. What, then, will the remembrance of earthly joys or woes avail to us?

How soon shall time sweep away in its wrecks every vestige of our earthly existence—crumbling these houses to the dust—burning up the earth on which we tread—and rolling away the blue firmament which canopies it! Ah! how soon shall we be looking back from the remote periods of eternity, through the long lapse of ages, to the few moments we passed in this rebellious world, in this infancy of our being. Oh! man, man—are you a thinking, rational, immortal being! And can you be regardless of such awful truths? Can you cling to this world, and chain your soul to earth, and clog it with all the vanities of time, when it struggles to be free from such trammels, and soar to its native skies?

Oh! what will touch the heart of man? What will convince him that eternity is worth more than the fleeting moments of life? that the redemption of the soul from endless sin and suffering demands a thought? Oh! God, send, send thy Spirit; interpose in mercy, or he is lost for ever!

Time rolls on! centuries glide away. Ere long, we shall look back from our remote position in the eternal world, as the associates of Noah now look back to the scenes they witnessed while on earth. Think of these spirits now in prison; think what must be their reflections in view of the fact, that they have bartered eternal joy for the sins of a moment on earth. Oh! how must remorse prey upon them as they at

this moment lift up their voices in wo, exclaiming, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

And is it so? Have thousands of years already elapsed, while they still continue the victims of sin? So says unerring truth. They wearied out the long suffering of God, and grieved away his Spirit. And shall eternity still roll on while they remain in their abode of sorrow? Nothing can be more sure. Their own hand has planted thorns in the pillow upon which they will for ever in vain seek repose.

And is this our danger? Are we exposed to so fearful a doom! "Verily," saith the Scripture to us, "unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Yes, very soon the graves, in which our bodies have mouldered to the dust, will disappear under the influence of time. Centuries will pass away, and not an individual shall know our names; not a vestige shall remain of our ever having existed. The world shall be busy; the hum of business and the notes of pleasure shall be heard. The sun shall shine; the rain shall fall; the storm shall rage; but we shall be far, far away; the veteran souls of many centuries. Oh! what is life, when we look forward to explore those regions where we must for ever dwell? What are earth's joys, when we think of heaven's undying glory? What are earth's trials, when we think of banishment eternal from the presence of God? But Heaven's gates are now open wide. Heaven's smiling fields now invite our steps. The angels' cordial welcome now bids us enter. The Father pleads; the Saviour invites; the Spirit strives. Oh! let us all hear, and accept, and live."

## NEARNESS OF DEATH.

WE sometimes seem to be nearer death than at others, but the whole progress of life is in the closest proximity to it. We are not merely tending towards a brink, over which ultimately, when we arrive at it, we must plunge. Even then, our condition would be fearful. But, in all our progress, we are travelling upon that brink. Our way winds along the perilous edge of the precipice. This makes our condition more fearful—this perpetual insecurity—this ever present and imminent peril. It is not the certainty of the fact in regard to death, that is so very appalling to the soul. It is the uncertainty of the time. It is not that ultimately we *must* die, but that presently we *may*. It is the thought of being always near to that last great evil, always adjacent to the judgment, always close upon the borders of eternity, and always within a little of our everlasting abode—the journey from every point of our path so short, a single stage, a single step! now here and anon there; this hour with men, the next with God. To-day, only a candidate for immortality, to-morrow its incumbent. To-day on trial for eternity, to-morrow, tried, and the case decided irreversibly and for ever. To-day on earth, to-morrow in heaven or in hell—nor yet the interval so great as a day. What a change awaits us both in body and soul! How fearful it would be, even if it were gradually brought about, if, one by one, the objects of earth faded from our view, and the novelties of eternity were slowly and separately unfolded to our vision, and if, one by one, the mysterious ligaments of life were sundered; if the summons of death designated a distant day for our appearance at the bar of God, and our way to it was long and difficult. But how much more fearful, when the change is as sudden as it is great, the familiar scenes of one world all vanishing at once, and the unimagined realities of the other all at once appearing; the summons of death requiring immediate attendance at the bar of God, and the way but a step. And there is no period of life that Death respects, no sanctuary into which he dare not enter, no citadel that he is afraid to attack. Nor will he ever depart from us more than the space of a step, though he may long maintain that distance from us. How solemn, that to-morrow thou mayest have to give account to God for the deeds of to-day; or to-day, for the deeds of yesterday! How many accounts are closed every day! how many cases decided at that court of final judicature! how many characters become unchangeably fixed in righteousness or unrighteousness! How many souls daily go to their last, long abodes! And, as death and judgment are so near, retribution is also at hand. The trial of your case will not occupy much time, and then immediately will ensue retribution. And, if retribution is so near to all, how near is perdition to some! There is but a step between the impenitent and hell! And, for the same reason, is the Christian near heaven! “Your redemption draweth nigh.”—NEVINS.